

"Worn Carpets And Bad Knees!"

Text: I Samuel 12:23, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and right way."

Scripture: I Samuel 12:13-25

(Illustration of death of Mrs. Prayer Meeting)

This appeared in the Grace Ambassador and is a humorous obituary lamenting the loss of the Prayer Meeting in Churches. Although it is supposed to be laughable, it has a sad commentary connected with it. Our denomination has been involved in the past few years in combatting what is called, "A Faith Crisis." We are supposedly involved in one, and our Denomination has been wrestling to overcome it. There may be a faith crisis in some churches, but I believe the real problems with our Denomination and many other Denominations is ~~problems of the Prayer Meeting~~ a crisis of another sort.

In our scripture today, Samuel is telling the people that Saul has been duly anointed and properly installed as the king they desired. He promises them that if they are willing to continue to serve the Lord, both the king and the people will prosper. But if they are unwilling to obey God, then in his words, "Shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers." vs 15b.

Then Samuel challenges them to observe what the Lord can do to show his power and His might. vs 16. Samuel asks, "Is it not wheat harvest today?" vs 17a. The wheat harvest took place in May and June. This would be sometime between the Passover and their Pentecost. It came right after the Barley harvest, the first sheaf of which was waved as an offering to the Lord, on the third day of the Passover. The rains were over and no more rain could be expected until the autumn. Rain in harvest was as rare a thing in Palestine as snow in winter. Solomon in ~~xxx~~ Proverbs 26:1 wrote, "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool." Thus we can see that what Samuel is going to ask God to do constitutes a miracle. vs 17b. And Samuel called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain to the extent that the people feared God, and Samuel.

So from this the people are made aware that their seeking of a king, was contrary to what God wanted for them. They ask Samuel to pray to God for them. They are concerned for their very lives because they have asked for a king, contrary to what God wanted for them. But Samuel reassures them that although they have greatly sinned, God will renew His relationship with them, if they are willing to be obedient to God.

Samuel also reassures them that he will not desert them either, and that he will continue to pray for them. He tells them, (text) "God, forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." There is no doubt that because of the functions he performed as a Priest, a Prophet, and an all around minister to the Jewish people, that Samuel was the most influential religious leader in Israel in his own time. Thus when he vowed that he would not forsake praying for the people of Israel, he was telling them that he would continue to intercede to God on their behalf, and he was striving to convince them that he cared and was concerned about their well being.

From this story it is evident once again that during times of prosperity the Jewish people turned from God and enjoyed their abundance, without giving too much thought to the blessings they had received. But when things began to fall apart and their little world was tumbling down all around them, it was then they became conscious of ~~their~~ their ~~blessings~~ need to turn to God.

John Sherman once said, "The best prophet of the future is the past." We can see this if we look at the events of life as we live it. We can see mirrored in us and our actions, the lives of previous generations ~~mirrored~~ if we dare to look. Our lives so closely parallel those of previous civilizations that it makes one shudder to think what the outcome will be. We are so much like the people of Israel it is frightening. When the depression of 1929 came upon our nation and the world, after some super years of abundance, people became aware of a need beyond themselves. Churches began to be needed once again after being forgotten to some extent. During the

years of the depression, families came together again. People ~~have~~ learned to live simply and to make do with what they had. ~~The religion movement~~ continued even more fervently after World War II, and tapered off a little until the Korean War. Then it surged up again and then tapered off and has continued to taper off a little more each year since. The more affluent we have become, the more people have felt little need for God. But now that we are ~~again~~

In the churches and in countless homes, ~~many~~ "Worn Carpets, and Bad Knees" were in evidence because people were spending time upon them in prayer to God for help. But following World War II affluence ~~has~~ reared its ugly head, and with it little or no need for the help of God.

People point to all sorts of ills as the reason for the decline of the church and religion, but I believe the biggest factor is that we do not pray. Prayer is something only the minister does on Sunday morning and that is what will carry me through the week. I do not believe we have a faith crisis as much as we have a "Prayer Crisis." I see the need in any church to get back on its collective knees and beseech Almighty God to help us. We need more "Worn Carpets and Bad Knees" in all congregations.

But perhaps what has really been wrong, has been that many people do not know how to pray. We have been so busy preaching the social Gospel, we have forgotten the example of Jesus, and neglected to educate church people in the fundamentals of the faith. Ask the average layman in any given congregation to pray and he or she is embarrassed. Why? Because they have not been properly instructed and taught and therefore they are fearful of making a spectacle of themselves by praying publicly. So as a result many people will refuse to ~~do so~~ pray. But everyone in any congregation should be capable of praying publicly if called upon to do so. We have equated for so long that the minister is the only one qualified to pray. At congregational meals, and fellowship dinners, the ministers are always asked to say the blessing, when anyone should be able to do so.

In the second part of our text for this morning, Samuel says something else

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
 BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA  
 SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY JANUARY 19, 1975  
 REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR  
 MRS. MARILYN STEPHENSON, ORGANIST  
 MR. RALPH COOPER, CHOIR DIRECTOR  
 CHRIS CAMPBELL, MARY CELLEN - ACOLYTES

ORDER FOR WORSHIP 11:00 A.M.  
 PRELUDE MUSIC: "CHANT OU VOYAGEUR" PAOFREWSKI  
 "PRELUDE ON 'OLIVET'"

SILENT PRAYER

- \*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 7 "REJOICE, YE PURE IN HEART"
- \*ACSCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN
- \*EXHORTATION
- \*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "OH CHRIST, WE STAND AS YOUR WATCHMEN EVER ON THE ALERT, READY FOR ANY THREAT TO OURSELVES OR OTHERS. CHRIST THE REVEALER OF GOD AND AS THE PROPHET SAID, WE ARE YOUR WATCHMEN. FORGIVE US WHEN WE HAVE DESERTED OUR POSTS. PARDON US WHEN WE HAVE LET SIN INVADE OUR OWN LIVES OR LEFT THE WAY OPEN FOR TEMPTATION TO OVERDOOME OUR NEIGHBOR. FORGIVE US WHERE WE HAVE FORGOTTEN TO WARN OUR NEIGHBOR OF IMPENDING DANGER, AND WHEN WE FAIL TO MEET HIS BASIC NEEDS. AND AS YOU FORGIVE, GRANT US THE STRENGTH TO STAND FAST AT OUR POSTS DESPITE OURSELVES. WE PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS WHO DIED TO MAKE US NEIGHBORS. AMEN."
- \*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)
- \*ASSURANCE OF PARDON - CHORAL AMEN
- \*PRAISE
  - \*PASTOR: 'O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS.
  - \*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE
- \*DOXOLOGY No. 551
- SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 SAMUEL 12: 13-25
- HYMN No. 229 "DEAR FATHER, TO THY MERCY-BEAT"
- \*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES' CREED)
- \*GLORIA PATRI
- \*CALL TO PRAYER
  - \*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.
  - \*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT.
  - \*PASTOR: LET US PRAY.
- \*PRAYER \* PRAYER RESPONSE

Tonite: Youth meeting from 6 grade up, re-organize ALL YOUTH.  
 Welcome visitors: sign card/book or both  
 Greet one another

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "SIMPLICITY" CLARKE

ANTHEM: "HOW GREAT THOU ART"

SERMON: "WORN CARPETS AND BAD KNEES!"

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 32 "SAVIOR, AGAIN IN THY DEAR

\*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE: "MAESTOSO" DOIGE

----- \*CONGREGATION STANDING -----

THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY

MR. & MRS. ROBERT TAIT TO THE "GLORY OF GOD".

SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE: \*PAUL RIEMER, DARYL TAIT,

JOHN DREHER, GARY PENAR AND DON KINGSLEY.

ELDER AND MRS. ROBERT BASEHORE WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL

AT THE DOOR TODAY.

NURSERY WILL BE PROVIDED TODAY BY MRS. ANN FALKNER

AND PAULA STEPHENSON.

THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY WAS 218.

\*HOSPITALIZED: MRS. EMMA HEGINBOTHAM, MRS. DOROTHY

NICHOLAS, MRS. TRESA NICHOLAS,

HAROLD SANDBACH.

WE EXTEND OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS

OF MRS. MARGARET BALDAUF WHO PASSED AWAY THIS WEEK.

TODAY - 2:00 P.M. BAPTISM - SHOULD YOU WANT YOUR BABY

BAPTIZED - CONTACT THE MINISTER.

TODAY - 6:00-7:00 - YOUTH CHOIR PRACTICE.

THURS. - 7:00 - BIBLE STUDY GROUP MEETS IN THE UNDER-

CROFT - EVERYONE IS WELCOME.

NEXT SUNDAY - 5:30 P.M. - CONGREGATIONAL DINNER AND

MEETING - CHET STAUFFER WILL BE MC; DAN FILETTI OF

17/76 WILL BE GUEST; MIKE NAZARUK WILL SHOW A FILM

ON "GOOD OLD TIMES" AT ST. PAUL'S; YEAR BOOKS WILL

BE DISTRIBUTED. CHILDREN 10 AND ABOVE ARE ASKED TO

ATTEND THE MEETING - SMALLER CHILDREN WILL BE SHOWN

A SPECIAL FILM BY HOWDY BOLAM. THE LAY LIFE AND WORK

COMMITTEE OF 1974 ARE IN CHARGE OF KITCHEN.

MRS. CHARLTON WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE CONGREGATION

FOR THE CARDS, PRAYERS, AND WELL WISHES.

NORMA KNAUER WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE MANY FRIENDS OF

ST. PAUL'S WHO SENT CARDS, FLOWERS AND GET WELL WISHES.

FLOWERS FOR THE ALTAR - DATES OPEN ARE FEB. 2, 16, 23.

MARCH 2; APRIL 6 AND 20.

HERALDA RIVERA - Hymnals

RUC-RAH

But after WW II affluence rear ugly need  
little no need 4 G

prop point all sorts ills 4 decline of Ch.  
Believe biggest factor, peop no pray  
Pray sumthin Minis do 4 us, last all week

No faith crisis, "PRAYER CRISIS"

I need any Ch get bak on knee & beseech G 2 help  
Need mor "Worn Carpets and Bad Knees" all congs  
perhaps wat real wron peop not know how pray  
so busy preach social gosp hav forgot examp Js  
We neglect educ Ch peop funda of faith

Ask avg laym any giv cong pray 2 embarrass  
Why?

Not prop instr/taut ther4 fear make spect selves  
As result many refuse pray

Every1 in cong shud B able pray if called upon  
2 long think minis only 1 can pray,  
this wrong, all shud B qualified

2nd part text Sam say signif (read 23b)  
He no embarrass, but teach rt 2 prop way  
ther4 take cue Sam & Js next Sun will try teach  
how pray

Shud help pray more effect & mor often  
bring penc/paper write dn if like,  
in fact encourage write things dn in serm remem

scrip next wk acct Js instruct Disc in prayer  
Lk 11:1-13

Think prayer, read bout pr. mull it over, & try  
pray H Sp work in us 2 BCOME pray peop

W/ with story cud B many congs call selves Xpians  
any peop those congs call selves Xpians  
(Illus. Robert Laidlaw prayerlessness)

Do we perhaps C selves this examp?

Let's ponder anew prayer indiv & as cong.

Wat need 2day more "Worn Carpets and Bad Knees",  
Bcause we spend more time on them in prayers 2  
Al G

Let us pray.

"Worn Carpets and Bad Knees!"

Text: I Sam. 12:23, "God forbid that I should sin  
against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I  
will teach you the good and right way."

Scripture: I Samuel 12:13-25

(Illus. death Mrs. Prayer Meeting)

This from GRACE AMBASSADOR magazine  
humorous obit yet sad commentary connected with it  
denom & faith crisis,

perhaps, But I think bigger prob  
In scrip this AM Sam tell peop Saul appointed king  
he prom if will serv Lord king & peop prosp  
But if unwill obey G read vs 15b

See what G can do vs 16

Sam sets stage 4 mirac vs 16

wh harv May/Jun tween Passo/Lente

rt aft Barley harv 1st sheaf wav offer G 3rd  
day Passo

no rain til autum Irov 26:1

result Sam ask mirac vs 18

pray 4 us vs 19

Reassur of Sam vs 20

G will renew relationship vs 22

Sam prom no desert/will pray vs 23 text

No doubt Sam as pr/proph/minis 2 Jew peop,

most infl lead Israel in own time

He tell cont intercede G 4 them/str conv he care

From all this evid 1ce again in prosp Jew peop turn  
from G & enjoy abund

we litt/no thot bless received

at things fall apart 2 world crumb, aware need G

(Illus. John Sherman, "Best proph of future is past")

Can C this if look events life as we liv it

Can C mirrored us 2 actions lives prev genera

if we dare look

Our lives closely parallel thos prev civilize  
makes 1 shudder think outcome

We so much like peop Is. it frightening

Dep 29 nation 2 world after super yrs ahun,

peop aware need beyond selves

Ch's began needed again after forgot cert extent

Our dep fams 2gether again/peop liv simply made

do what had

In ch's homes, "Worn Carpets and Bad Knees" were  
in evidence, Bcause peop spend time in prayer

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife  
 Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link  
 Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link  
153 Keck Road  
Sarver, Pa. 16055  
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Married: December 15, 1951  
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill  
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

**SCHOOLING:**

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United  
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,  
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

**PASTORATES:**

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in  
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ  
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary  
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity  
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central  
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of  
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United  
Church of Christ

## PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.